

OPEN ACCESS TO MONOGRAPHS IN THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

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The focus - or the low-hanging fruit, as Peter Suber puts it - of the Open Access movement has from the beginning been the scientific articles. The crucial role of articles as the primary vehicle of scientific communication is indisputable, at least in the Sciences and Medicine but less so in the Humanities and Social Science. Also, authors usually don't get any financial remuneration for articles and hence has no interest to protect any income by restricting access.

But what about books, scholarly and scientific monographs? In many or perhaps most fields of the Humanities and Social Science books are regarded as the most important form of scholarly communication. This should not be seen as a sign of these subjects being backwards in comparison with the more developed STM (Science, Technology and Medicine) fields. Rather it is founded in the very content matter of Humanities and Social Science, in its special form of scholarly discourse. This was recently analyzed, very convincingly, by a Swedish historian, Janken Myrdal, in a book about "The rules of the game in the craft of science: about Human Science and Natural Science).¹

We often get comments from Humanist scholars that Open Access might be a good thing, but it is not really relevant for them. For once, in their fields you don't find the extremely high priced journals as in STM. Also, we usually talk about articles and they are not that important. Actually they resist the way recent evaluation and financing models based on bibliometrics force them to drop monographs in favor of articles.

But now it seems like the Open Access movement is taking decisive steps into this heartland of the Humanist scholars. Perhaps it's time to rethink the role of Open Access in future of the monograph.

1st OAPEN conference

In the prestigious Humboldt University in Berlin a conference was held on February 25, devoted to Open Access for academic books in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The 1st OAPEN conference marked the end of the EU funding for the project OAPEN

(Open Access Publishing in European Networks) and hopefully also the start of further initiatives in this field.

There is a news story highlighting some of the main points of the programme and also presentations from the speakers to be found at the OAPEN web site.² I will just add a few impressions.

The OAPEN project aims to develop and implement an OA publication model for academic books in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Its partners are a number of European university presses with Amsterdam University Press being the coordinator. There seems to be two main results from the project.

1. In a number of interesting reports the project has analyzed user needs, models and best practices for Open Access publishing in the Humanities and Social Science, leading up to what is called the OAPEN publishing model. The argument goes as follows. There is a deep crisis in the publishing of monographs in HSS, with dropping sales due mainly to shrinking library budgets, where licenses for e-journals take the large bulk. As sales volumes per book go down, prices have to go up, resulting in even smaller volumes and smaller audiences. With an Open Access model you may again reach a much larger audience. The economic model may include publication charges from author institutions or funders and also print or print-on-demand versions with a price.

2. The project has also given birth to a permanent consortium that runs the OAPEN online library.³ A publisher can join here for a fee and get a number of services, technical as well as marketing and branding. The OAPEN library at the moment holds around a thousand Open Access monographs from a number of prestigious European university presses.

There are also follow-up projects to OAPEN starting in Great Britain and the Netherlands.

Some interesting speakers

Carl-Christian Buhr, member of the cabinet of Ms Neelie Kroes, the vice-president of the European

¹ Myrdal, Janken, Spelets regler i vetenskapens hantverk. Om humanvetenskap och naturvetenskap. Stockholm, Natur & Kultur, 2009.

² <http://project.oapen.org/index.php/news>

³ <http://www.oapen.org>

Commission, outlined the strategy of the EC for Open Access. He didn't say much in specific about monographs. What is noteworthy is that he again stressed that the European commission plans to enlarge the present OA pilot of 20 % of the 7th Framework Programme to the whole of FP8. As often the access to scientific data seems to be a central issue for the EU.

It was also interesting to hear a major commercial, scholarly publisher, Sven Fund, CEO of De Gruyter, relating their experiment with the De Gruyter Open Library. He definitively saw a future in an Open Access model and stressed that the economics of it should be transparent.

A quite different perspective was given by Gary Hall from Open Humanities Press, a cooperative scholar led initiative. This is a community effort with no profits involved, that engages a number of well-known scholars in critical and cultural theory like Sigi Jötkandt, Bruno Latour and Gayatri Spivak.

The project had also invited speakers to present regional overviews for this meeting. Eloy Rodrigues, Director of the Library of the University of Minho, talked about the situation in Southern Europe. An important difference from the Nordic countries is that we here find much larger potential audiences worldwide, especially for literature in Spanish and Portuguese.

State of the art in Sweden

I made a presentation of the state of the art in Sweden together with Lisbeth Söderqvist, Research Officer at the Swedish Research Council. I collected some information and viewpoints by a small questionnaire survey to repository managers from major Swedish universities about Open Access publishing of monographs. Lisbeth could report a study made by the SRC on grant-holding researchers publication patterns. How many of them published monographs, and who were the publishers? There were also a few other reported or ongoing studies that we could use as a basis for some very tentative conclusion.⁴ To sum up:

- There is a well-developed, nationally coordinated infrastructure of Open Access repositories with an expanding content. There are around 11 000 OA monographs in these, mainly theses and in other cases often books published by institutions or public

⁴ Lindh, K & Wiklund, G. Open access för humanister och rättsvetare. En kartläggning av publiceringspolicy och praxis inom nordisk utgivning. Slutrapport. http://www.kb.se/dokument/Om/projekt/open_access/2010/oa_fo_rhumanister20100301.pdf

authorities with an online version in the repository.

- There are only two professional university presses, one for popular medicine, the other for pedagogical literature, and none of them offering e-publishing. Some universities have a university-wide presentation of printed Acta series, some with a web shop and a few with a connection to the OA repository. Many universities have no university-wide presentation of printed series and no services for ordering printed works. The connections between the printed Acta series and repositories are very uneven, and sometimes invisible.

- Sweden does not have any big publishing house with an academic profile. A researcher coming from the Humanities, writing in Swedish, normally turns to a small or medium-sized publisher, that doesn't use any formal scientific evaluation processes, print small editions, does very little marketing and doesn't publish Open Access. Usually the publication is paid in advance with funding from research councils, foundations and similar agencies.

- In general, repository managers don't see themselves as publishers; they have no quality control and selection, no marketing and sales organization. However, some have plans for more e-publishing of original material with peer review and prestige. They want to have more of the Acta series as full-text in the repository. They want to develop Print on Demand functions (some have already) and want to have more parallel e-publishing of externally published monographs.

- My conclusions are that repositories seem to be the main platform for a growing availability of OA monographs. Repositories should strengthen the links to university (printed) publication series. A good sign is the new OA-policy of Malmö University: "all publications published by Malmö University, such as dissertations, journals and other publication series, also are to be deposited in full-text in MUEP".

Perhaps repositories could themselves develop into university e-presses with more typical publisher functions, and I cite David Lawrence, editor of the LiU E-Press from my survey:

"We have also come so far as to discuss within our steering group the possibility of setting up a more rigorous peer-reviewing system so that we could publish original material and give it some prestige. Objective would be to get a level 1 ranking in the Norwegian system as a book publisher"

- The Swedish Research Council and other research

funders obviously could play an important role as they provide much of the funding for researchers publishing monographs. The Riksbankens Jubileumsfond is adding a standard grant of 30 000 SEK for Open Access publishing, also for monographs, on top of their project grant from 2010. The SRC finds it hard to require Open Access publishing of monographs as it could be an obstacle to researchers aspiring to publish by prestigious international publishers.

On the other hand it would seem quite reasonable to require Open Access publishing or at least a positive policy towards parallel publishing from Swedish academic publishers if the publication costs are already paid for in advance, either by a research funder or by a university. Lund University recently has taken a step in this direction by creating a fund to support OA publishing of monographs in the Humanities and Theology by Lund University researchers.



First OAPEN Conference, Berlin 2011



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